

PRE-EXISTENCE,

A

P O E M.



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# PRE-EXISTENCE.

A P O E M.

IN IMITATION OF  
M I L T O N.

Elucidating that passage in

P A R A D I S E L O S T.

Previous to the

M O S A I C C R E A T I O N.

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*"Nine times the space that measures day and night  
To mortal Man; he, with his horrid crew,  
Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the fiery gulph."*

P A R. L O S T. Book I.

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Written originally in the last Century,

And now CAREFULLY REVISED.

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By D. M O U N T F O R T.

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With an A P O L O G Y to the R E A D E R.

And the original P R E F A C E E X P L A N A T O R Y and I L L U S T R A T I V E.

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## A P O L O G Y

T O T H E  
R E A D E R.

**T**HE following Poem was put into my hands some time since, by a gentleman who is possessed of several valuable tracts, equally celebrated for their antiquity as their excellence: The more than common pleasure I received in its perusal, induced me to the desire of transferring that pleasure to those, whose laudable curiosity, in literary researches, may be amply gratified in the beauties of this production, as well as giving to the Public a Poetic Jewel, whose lustre in the last century, must have rendered it invaluable to its possessor.

How the author of so sublime a piece, came to conceal his name, (for in the old printed copy we are equally at a loss), is a circumstance rather

ther astonishing; it certainly would have added to the fame of the first writer living, and whatever reasons there might have been for such omission, they have become a cause of regret to every one capable of receiving unspeakable satisfaction from so luxuriant a subject.

One would almost suppose from the affinity of the Poem to *Paradise Lost*, but more from the harmony of the numbers, and the sublimity of the subject, that no other than Milton's self could give to the world so accomplished a matter; so similar to his own immortal production!

But as these are doubts absolutely impossible to resolve, they are needless of any further comment: The present Editor, though it would be wrong to say he had no emolument in view, declares that the principal end he has in this Publication, is to rescue the labours of real genius from an unmerited oblivion.

Dec. 12, 1778.

P R E F A C E

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P R E F A C E

EXPLANATORY AND ILLUSTRATIVE.

**T**HE structure of the following Poem being founded on an opinion, neither well relished, nor understood by many of the present age, viz. *That all human souls had an existence antecedent to the Mosaic creation*; it may be thought necessary to prefix some few remarks, in order to explain the work.

The Doctrine of PRE-EXISTENCE of SOULS is, that all human souls were at first angelic spirits, and being seduced by Lucifer to be favourers of his rebellion, yet not acting out of malice or envy against the most High, (as the devils and damned spirits did), were condemned to inhabit earth in bodies of flesh, as a punishment of their guilt; according to the subject matter of the following Poem.

That



That the souls of men were at first created celestial spirits, and upon forfeiture of their better state and condition, were, by way of penance, decreed by the Almighty to inhabit terrestrial bodies; was the undoubted opinion of some of the most ancient and learned fathers of the church; as *Origen*, *Augustin*, *Tertullian*, &c. and analogous thereto, was the opinion of the *Indian Bra- mins*, the *Chaldean*, and *Persian Magi*†, the *Egyptian Gymnosophists*, the *Jewish Rabbies*, the *Grecian Sophies* and all the *Pythagoreans*.

The Poem seems intended as an account of what occurred intermediate to the battle between *Michael* and *Lucifer*, and the world's creation; and in part to fill up that space or chasm in *Milton's Paradise Lost*, Book I. line 50, which is there exprest only in three lines.

*Nine times the space that measures day and night  
To mortal Man; he, with his horrid crew,  
Lay vanquish'd, rolling in the fiery Gulf—*

During which space we are to suppose the world was created; as it is very properly introduced by the occurrences mentioned in the following Poem.

The Author begins it with Archangels sounding a retreat from the pursuit of the rebel angels condemned

† Vide Lux Orient.

demned to hell ; and the closing of hell gates. Then follows an account of the seduced, but repentant spirits, excluded heaven, but not doomed to hell ; a description of heaven's gates, the throne of God, his attendant angels, his decree or sentence pronounced on the several orders of spirits, wherein the obedient are applauded and rewarded ; and the damnation of the malicious and obstinate rebels confirmed.

And then comes that which is the chief scope of the Poem, viz. The condition of those spirits who were associates in the rebellion ; not out of malice, but seduced by Satan's guile ; who are here destined to inhabit earth in human bodies, with a promise of being restored to God's favour, if their

*Virtues second his decree.*

Then is given a history of the intended creation, and the several parts of the world, man's residence therein : that the soul is to be divested of all its former ideas, and then inclosed in flesh, is fettered with the members of the body, and distracted by several passions arising from the *senses* : that longer penance, (*i. e.*) is to be borne by the first race of men, than those that follow, l. 215.

And then you have a description of the several residences, to be chosen by spirits of different tempers ; as the melancholy spirit, l. 223. The

page

sage or grave spirit, l. 232. The busy active spirit, l. 271. The penurious and ambitious spirits, l. 277. The martial and heroic, l. 320. The litigious, &c. l. 330.

And concludes, that man shall have no rest till death, l. 342, which though it appears terrible to human nature, l. 360, yet it enlarges the soul, by freeing it from the prison of the body, l. 377, and renders it capable of its original residence, Heaven,

P R E.



( 21 )

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P R E - E X I S T E N C E .

A P O E M .

*In imitation of MILTON.*

---

NOW had the Archangel trumpet, rais'd sub-  
lime  
Above the walls of Heaven, begun to sound ;  
All Æther took the blast, and Hell beneath  
Shook with celestial noise ; th' Almighty Host  
Hot with pursuit, and reeking with the blood  
Of guilty cherubs, smear'd in sulphurous dust,  
Pause at the known command of sounding gold ;  
And first they close the wide Tartarian gates,  
Th' impenetrable folds, on brazen hinge  
Roll creaking horrible ; the din beneath  
O'ercomes the roar of flames, and deafens Hell ;  
Then thro' the solid gloom with nimble wing  
They cut their shining traces up to light ;  
Return'd upon the edge of Heavenly day,  
Where thinnest beams play round the vast obscure,

B

And

And with eternal gleam drive back the night ;  
 They find the troops less stubborn, less involv'd  
 In crime and ruin, barr'd the realms of peace,  
 Yet uncondemn'd to baleful seats of woe,  
 Doubtful and suppliant ; all the plumes of light 20  
 Moul't from their shuddering wings, and sickly fear,  
 Shades every face with horror : conscious guilt  
 Rolls in the livid eye-ball, and each breast  
 Shakes with the dread of future doom unknown.

'Twas there the wide circumference of Heaven  
 Opens in two vast gates, that inward turn  
 Voluminous, on jasper columns hung  
 By Geometry divine, they ever glow  
 With living sculptures, that arise by turns  
 T' imboss the shining leaves, by turns they set 30  
 To give succeeding argument their place ;  
 In holy Hieroglyphicks on they move :  
 The gaze of journeying Angels, as they pass  
 Oft looking back, and held in deep surprise ;  
 Here stood the troops distinct ; the cherub guard  
 Unbarr'd the splendid gates, and in they roll  
 Harmonious, for a vocal spirit fits  
 Within each hinge, and as they onward drive,  
 In just divisions break the numerous jarr  
 With symphony melodious, such as spheres 40  
 Involv'd in tenfold wreaths are said to sound.  
 Out flows a blaze of glory ; for on high  
 Tow'ring advanc'd the moving throne of God,

Vast

Vast and majestic; on each radiant side  
 The pointed rays slope glittering, at the foot  
 Glides a full tide of day, that onward pours  
 In liquid torrents, thro' the black abyss  
 Sparkling among reluctant shades which thence  
 Retire confus'd; as when Vesuvius shakes  
 With inward torments, and disgorges flames,  
 O'er the vast mountain's ridge, the burning waves  
 Drive their refulgent curls, and on they roll,  
 Sweeping the glowing plains down to the sea;  
 Th' affrighted sea leaps back with hideous roar  
 To give the fire its course. Thus chaos wild  
 Hissing recoils to let in floods of light.

Above the throne, th' ideas Heavenly bright  
 Of past, of present, and of coming time  
 Fix'd their immov'd abode, and there present  
 An endless landscape of created things,  
 To fight celestial, where Angelic eyes  
 Are lost in prospect; for the shiny range  
 Boundless and various in its bosom bears  
 Millions of full proportion'd worlds beheld  
 With steadfast eyes, till more arise to view,  
 And farther inward scenes start up unknown.

Myriads of Seraphs in long series wait  
 About the throne, and as it moves proceed  
 In numerous order to celestial song:  
 Above, the symphony of mellow flutes,

70  
 And



And harps by flying Angels gently touch'd  
 Relieve the trumpet's rage and fully blend  
 The solemn sounds in harmony divine ;  
 Such as might tune new worlds, and give the laws  
 To globes on high, and the just figure guide,  
 Of planets forming all their airy dance ;  
 Below the blazing wheels drive bounding o'er  
 The starry pavement ; stars and hills of light  
 Double their glories, where the chariot rolls  
 With rattling sound ; and th' *Empyreum* vast 80  
 Down to its stedfast axis, groans throughout  
 Under the burning tracts, till now it rests  
 Upon the gaping brink of Heaven ; and there  
 With open pomp, fills the vast empty space.

Silence ensues ; a deep and awful pause  
 More terrible, all expectation held  
 In horror ; now wrath, imminent amaz'd  
 With dreadful precipice, to all it seems  
 More formidable near : Then from the throne  
 A vocal thunder roll'd the sense of God. 90  
 Majestically long, repugnant all  
 To princes customs here ; their judgments flash  
 On guilt, with words, concise, and sudden blaze  
 Quite otherways, the gods enlarged speech  
 Sets wide the fate of things ; that all around  
 Might take full prospect of their coming doom.

Servants of God ! and virtues great in arms !  
 —We approve your faithful works ! and you return

Bless'd

Bless'd from the dire pursuit of rebel foes ;  
 Refov'd, obdurate, they have tried the force 100  
 Of this right hand, and known Almighty pow'r,  
 Transfix'd with light'ning down they sunk, they fell  
 Into the fiery gulph, and deep they plunge  
 Below the burning waves, to hide their heads  
 In shelter from my vengeance bellowing hence  
 More fierce, and scorching with more dreadful fires.  
 There let them find their doom, that durst defy  
 Omnipotence, and slight his proffer'd grace ;  
 Rolling in flames, and ne'er to feel a dawn  
 Of Heavenly day ; instead, the mind imbibes 110  
 Eternal gloom, and sing'd with constant flames,  
 Can find no ease, while fierce their boiling rage,  
 Eats through the empyreal mold, and glows within,  
 With endless pain ; not one repentant thought  
 Shall cool the breast, but proud in horrid crime,  
 The soul anneals, and hardens in the fire.

But you ! commission'd by commands divine,  
 Have wisely fill'd your trust, and clos'd 'em all  
 Within the fervid lake lest any roam  
 Into the dark abyss to shun their doom, 120  
 And in the womb, immense of things unborn  
 Should seek annihilation ; you must rise  
 Among the shining Virtues more sublime ;  
 On lofty thrones prefer'd for lofty deeds.

For

For you, ye guilty throng! that lately join'd  
 In this sedition, since seduc'd from good,  
 And caught in trains of guile, by spirits malign,  
 Superior in their order; you accept  
 Trembling, my Heavenly clemency and grace.  
 When the long *era*, once has fill'd its orb, 139  
 You shall emerge to light, and humbly here  
 Again shall bow before this favouring throne,  
 If your own virtue second my decree:  
 But all must have their *manes* first below,  
 So stands th' eternal fate, but smoother yours  
 Than what lost Angels feel; nor can our reign  
 Without just dooms, the peace of Heaven secure;  
 For forms celestial new erect in glory  
 Would totter, dazzled with the heights of power,  
 Did not the nerves of justice fix their sight. 140

See, where below in *chaos* wond'rous deep,  
 A speck of light dawns forth, and thence throughout  
 The shades, in many a wreath my forming power  
 There swiftly turns the burning eddy round,  
 Absorbing all crude matter near its brink;  
 Which next, with subtle motions take the form  
 I please to stamp, the seed of infant worlds  
 All now in *embrio*; but e'er long shall rise  
 Variously scatter'd in this vast expanse,  
 Involv'd in winding orbs, until the brims 150  
 Of outward circles brush these heavenly gates;  
 The middle point a *globe* of circling fire

Shall



Shall hold, which round it shades its genial heat;  
 Where e'er I kindle life, the motion grows  
 In all the endless orbs, from this machine:  
 And infinite vicissitudes shall roll  
 About this restless centre; for I rear  
 139 In those meanders, turn'd a dusty ball,  
 Deform'd all o'er with woods, whose shaggy tops  
 Enclose eternal mists, and deadly damps 160  
 Hover within their boughs, to choke the light;  
 Impervious scenes of horror, till reform'd  
 To fields, and grassy dales, and flowing meads,  
 By your continual pains: The torrid zone  
 Here fries with constant heat, the swarthy world;  
 Parching the plains where hideous monsters glare,  
 And dusty mountains, tumbled by the winds,  
 140 Stretch their uncertain heaps; no less the frost  
 At either end shall rage; and high shall raise  
 Firm promontories; vast the ruins seem 170  
 Of desert nature, and the 'ternal piles  
 Load all the dreary coast, and thick in ice  
 Arm either pole, that yearly peeps apace  
 On coming light, but feels no gentle ray  
 Unbind the frozen chain: Between these lie  
 The changeful climes, alternately they burn  
 And chill again by turns; for both extremes  
 Make their incursions here; and this My will  
 150 Unchangeable, ordains your doleful seat.

Beneath;

Beneath ; mishapen chaos, and the field  
 Of fighting atoms, where hot, moist, and dry  
 Wage an eternal war with dismal roar ;  
 The dismal roar, breaks smotherly on the ground,  
 Sacred to horror, and eternal night :  
 Here silence sits, whose visionary shape  
 In folds of wreathy mantling, sinks obscure,  
 And in dark fumes reclines his drowsy head,  
 An urn he holds, from whence a lake proceeds,  
 Wide, flowing gently, smooth, and *Lethe* nam'd :  
 Hither compell'd, each soul must drink long draughts  
 Of those forgetful streams, 'till forms within,  
 And all the great ideas fade and die :  
 For if vast thoughts shou'd play about a *mind*  
 Inclos'd in flesh, and dragging cumbrous life,  
 Fluttering and beating in the mournful cage,  
 It soon would break its grates, and wing away :  
 'Tis therefore My decree, the soul return  
 Naked from off this beach, and perfect blank,  
 To visit the new world ; and strait to feel  
 Itself, in crude consistence closely shut,  
 The dreadful monument of just revenge,  
 Immur'd by heaven's own hand, and plac'd erect  
 On fleeting matter, all imprison'd round  
 With walls of clay ; th' *etherial mould* shall bear  
 The chain of members, deafened with an ear,  
 Blinded by eyes, and manac'd in hands.

Here

Here anger, vast ambition, and disdain,  
 And all the haughty movements rise and fall,  
 As storms of neighbouring atoms tear the soul,  
 And hope and love, and all the calmer turns  
 Of easy hours, in their gay gilded shapes,  
 With sudden run, skim our deluded minds,  
 As matter leads the dance; but one desire  
 Unsatisfied, shall mar ten thousand joys.

The rank of *beings*, that shall first advance,  
 Drink deep of human life, and long shall stay  
 On this great scene of cares; from all the rest,  
 That longer for the destin'd body wait,  
 Less penance I expect, and short abode  
 In those pale dreary kingdoms will content: 200  
 Each has his lamentable lot, and all  
 On different racks, abide the pains of life.

The *pensive spirit* takes the lonely grove,  
 Nightly he visits all the sylvan scenes,  
 Where far remote, a melancholy moon  
 Raising her head, serene, and shorn of beams,  
 Throws here and there, her glimmerings through the  
 trees,  
 To make more awful darkness; starry lights  
 Hung upon high, shed round 'em as they burn  
 A pale sad influence, and they gild the plains 230  
 With doubtful rays, which strike within the shades  
 A trembling lustre, and uncertain light.



The *sage* shall haunt this solitary ground,  
 And view the dismal landscape, limn'd within  
 In horrid shades mixt with imperfect light;  
 Here *judgment*, blinded by delusive sense  
 Contracted thro' the cranny of an eye,  
 Shoots up faint languid beams to that dark seat  
 Wherein the soul, bereav'd of native fire,  
 Sits intricate, in misty clouds obscur'd,  
 Ev'n from itself conceal'd, and there presides  
 O'er jarring images with reason's sway,  
 Where by his ordering, more confounds their forms;  
 And by decisions more embroils the fray:  
 The more he strives t'appease, the more he feels  
 The struggling surges of the darklome void  
 Impetuous, and the thick revolving thoughts  
 Encountring thoughts, image on image turn'd,  
 A chaos of wild science, where sometimes  
 The clashing nations strike out casual light:  
 Which soon must perish, and be lost again  
 In the thick darkness round it. Now he tries  
 With all his might to raise some weighty thought,  
 Of me, of fate, or of the 'ternal round,  
 Which but recoils to crush the labouring mind:  
 High are his reasonings, but the feeble clue  
 Of fleeting images he draws in vain  
 To wondrous length; (for still the turning maze  
 Eludes his art) its end flies far away,  
 And leaves him tracing round the toilsome path,  
 Returning oft on the same beaten thought.

For much of good he talks, and life serene,  
 Of happiness deny'd, the dismal waste  
 Of wisdom's privilege, and th' obdurate breast,  
 Stubborn in anguish; idle wisdom, all  
 Weak forcery to charm, a real pain;  
 Distasting crouds, and business, thus he seeks  
 Diversion in himself, but with deep thoughts  
 He kindles doubt; and while he strives to blow  
 The ashes off, revives the brand of care. 270

Hence far remov'd, a different noisy race  
 In cities full, and frequent take their seat,  
 Where Honour's crush'd, and Gratitude oppress'd,  
 With swelling hopes of gain, that raise within  
 A tempest, and drove onward by success,  
 Can find no 'bounds; for creatures of a day  
 Stretch their wide cares to ages; full increase  
 Starves the penurious soul, while empty sound  
 Fills the ambitious; *that* shall ever shrink,  
 Pining with endless cares, whilst *this* shall swell 280  
 To tympany enormous. Bright in arms  
 Here shines the hero, out he fiercely leads  
 A martial throng, his instruments of rage,  
 To fill the world with death, and *thin* mankind.  
 Ambition drives, and round the world he roams,  
 Marking his way with blood; the dreadful noise  
 Begets a *fame*; and all the breath he leaves  
 Is spent in his false praise, and vainly bloats  
 The tyrant's soul; while high his kingdoms rise

In fleeting pomp, hovering their gawdy wings 290  
 Around the servile globe, that tamely bounds  
 Beneath his haughty reign ; and all his slaves  
 Under his yoke shall groan, and scarce shall groan  
 Without a crime : Here torturing engines roar  
 With human voice disguis'd , earth, water, fire,  
 Are made (dire elements of cruelty !)  
 Subservient to his lust, and power to kill ;  
 Yet shall the herd endure, and dare not break  
 United their imaginary chain ;  
 While their great monarch chills with equal fears, 300  
 No less a slave than they ; each rumour shakes  
 The haughty purple ; dark and cloudy cares  
 Involve the awful throne, that stands erect,  
 Balanc'd on the wild people's temper'd rage,  
 And fortified with dangerous arts of power :  
 But death shall shift those scenes of misery ;  
 Then doubtful titles kindle up in new wars,  
 And urge on ling'ring fate ; the ensigns blaze  
 About the camp, and drums and trumpets found,  
 Prepare a solemn way to grisly war : 310  
 Javelins, and bearded spears in ghastly ranks  
 Erect their shining heads, and round the field  
 A harvest's seen of formidable death ;  
 Then joins the horrid shock, whose bellowing *burst*  
 Torments the shatter'd air, and drowns the groans  
 Of men below, that roll in certain death :  
 These are the mortal sports, and tragic plays,  
 By man himself embroil'd ; the dire debate

Makes



290 makes the waste desert seem fertile and mild,  
 here savage nature in one common lies, 320  
 homely cots possess'd; all squalid, wild,  
 and despicably poor, they range the field  
 and feel their share of hunger, care, and pain,  
 created by flying prey; and now they tear  
 their panting flesh; and now with nails unclean  
 they tug their shaggy beards; and deeply quaff  
 human woe, even when they rudely sip  
 the flowing stream, or chew the savory pulp  
 of nature's freshest viands; fragrant fruits  
 300 join'd with trembling, and in danger sought. 330

But where th' appointed limits of a law,  
 enforces the general safety of the world,  
 no greater quiet reigns, for wanton man  
 in giddy frolic, easily leaps o'er  
 his own invented bounds; hence rapine, fraud,  
 revenge, and lust, and all the hideous train  
 of nameless ills, distort the meagre mind  
 to endless shapes of woe. Here misers mourn  
 departed gold, and there defrauded heirs  
 their perjuries complain; the blended loads 340  
 of punishment and crime, deform the world,  
 and give no rest to man; with pangs and throes  
 he enters on the stage; prophetic tears  
 and infant cries preclude his future woes;  
 and all is one continued scene of grief,  
 all the sad fable curtain falls in death.

But

But that last act shall in one moment close  
 Of doubt and darkness; pains shall crack the strings  
 Of life decay'd; no less the soul convuls'd  
 Trembles in anxious cares, and shuddering stands, 35  
 Afraid to leap into the opening gulph  
 Of future fate, till all the banks of clay,  
 Fall from beneath his feet; in vain he grasps  
 The shatter'd reeds that cheat his easy wish:  
 Reason is now no more; that narrow lamp  
 (Which with its sickly fires, wou'd shoot its beams  
 To distances unknow'n, and stretch its rays  
 Aseanc'd my paths, in deepest darkness veil'd)  
 Is sunk into its socket, inly there  
 It burns a dismal light; th' expiring flame 36  
 Is choak'd in fumes, and parts in various doubt.

Then the gay glories of the living world  
 Shall cast their empty varnish, and retire  
 Out of his feeble view; and rising shade  
 Sits hovering o'er all natures various face:  
 Music shall cease, and instruments of joy  
 Shall fail that sullen hour; nor can the mind  
 Attend their sounds, when fancies swim in death  
 Confus'd, and crush'd with cares, for long shall seem  
 The dreary road, and melancholy dark, 37  
 That leads he knows not where; here empty space  
 Gapes horrible, and threatens to absorb  
 All being; yonder footy dæmons glare,  
 And dolorous spectres grin; the shapeless rout

rings  
 before his eyes obscure ; till all in death  
 shall vanish, and the prisoner now enlarg'd  
 regains the flaming borders of the sky.

He ended. Peals of thunder rend the Heavens,  
 and chaos, from the bottom turn'd, resounds 380  
 The mighty clangor : All the heavenly host  
 approve the high decree, and loud they sing  
 eternal justice ! while the guilty troops,  
 sad with their doom, but sad without despair,  
 fall fluttering down to *Lethe's* lake, and there  
 for penance, and the destin'd body wait.

F I N I S.



Wild imagination, dance and play,  
And the eyes of pleasure; all in death  
Vanish, and the prison now enlarged  
Opens the flaming borders of the sky.  
It ended. I felt the power of the heavens  
Of chaos, from the holy, returns  
To my clay: A light, a holy light  
I love the high deities, and love they hang  
Ternat justice: while the guilty troops  
Ed with their doom, but sad without despair,  
All hurrying down to Acheron's lake, and there  
Or penance, and the death of body wait.

T. I. N. I. S.